



New Every Mourning

The Lamentations of Jeremiah
Chapter One

"Look, It's Your Destiny"

Below the hill now known as Golgotha and Calvary, just outside of Jerusalem, there is a dark incline known as Jeremiah's Grotto. This is suggested as the location where the prophet sat and observed the ruins of the city while writing his Lamentations.

If this is true, then it is appropriate that Jeremiah's Grotto is located so closely to the spot where the Savior, Jesus Christ, died on the Cross some 600 years later. He, too, wept over Jerusalem's destruction, knowing what would befall the Jews for having rejected God's offer of the kingdom by despising their one true King.

Having warned Judah for four decades of the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, Jeremiah put his tears into words once more in a series of five laments.

Although there are other examples of this literary style in the Bible, this book is the only one wholly written as a lament.

The Hebrew title of the book comes from the first words of chapters one, two and four - *Ekah*, meaning "Ah, how!" Another Hebrew word *Ginoth* has been used, meaning "elegies" or "lamentations." The Greek title is *Thronoi* - "dirges" or "laments." The Latin is *Threni* - "tears" or "lamentations."

I think you get the idea! It's gonna be sad.

Three themes reappear and run through Jeremiah's five laments.

1. There is mourning over Jerusalem's destruction and desolation.
2. There is confession of sin and the acknowledgment God's judgment was righteous and deserved.
3. We see the wealth of God's mercies and the certain hope of Israel's restoration.

We are picking as the book's key verses 3:22-23,

Lamentations 3:22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

Lamentations 3:23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

We've chosen as a title for the series, *New Every Mourning* - spelling it m-o-u-r-n-i-n-g. The Lord's faithfulness and mercies are indeed new each day but they are especially real to us each time we find cause for mourning - for sorrow, for tears.

Chapter one breaks very obviously into two movements. The first, in verses one through eleven, is a lamentation by Jeremiah. Then, in verses twelve through twenty-two, Jerusalem is personified as lamenting.

Lamentations 1:1 How lonely sits the city That was full of people!
How like a widow is she, Who was great among the nations! The
princess among the provinces Has become a slave!

Lamentations 1:2 She weeps bitterly in the night, Her tears are
on her cheeks; Among all her lovers She has none to comfort her.
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have
become her enemies.

Lamentations 1:3 Judah has gone into captivity, Under affliction
and hard servitude; She dwells among the nations, She finds no
rest; All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits.

Lamentations 1:4 The roads to Zion mourn Because no one
comes to the set feasts. All her gates are desolate; Her priests
sigh, Her virgins are afflicted, And she is in bitterness.

Lamentations 1:5 Her adversaries have become the master, Her
enemies prosper; For the LORD has afflicted her Because of the
multitude of her transgressions. Her children have gone into
captivity before the enemy.

Lamentations 1:6 And from the daughter of Zion All her splendor
has departed. Her princes have become like deer That find no
pasture, That flee without strength Before the pursuer.

Lamentations 1:7 In the days of her affliction and roaming,
Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things That she had in the
days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, With
no one to help her, The adversaries saw her And mocked at her
downfall.

Jeremiah's mind and heart are flooded with images that inspire
sorrow. He compares Jerusalem and its citizens to a widow; then
to a slave; then to an abandoned lover; then to a betrayed friend.

The priests, so important and active in bridging the gap between man and God, have no place to work. Innocent young virgins, indeed all the innocent children, suffer for the sins of their parents and leaders.

Now that the destruction has come the people look upon what they've lost.

The cause was given in verse five, "the multitude of her transgressions." It's expanded upon beginning with verse eight.

Lamentations 1:8 Jerusalem has sinned gravely, Therefore she has become vile. All who honored her despise her Because they have seen her nakedness; Yes, she sighs and turns away.

Lamentations 1:9 Her uncleanness is in her skirts; She did not consider her destiny; Therefore her collapse was awesome; She had no comforter. "O LORD, behold my affliction, For the enemy is exalted!"

Lamentations 1:10 The adversary has spread his hand Over all her pleasant things; For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, Those whom You commanded Not to enter Your assembly.

Lamentations 1:11 All her people sigh, They seek bread; They have given their valuables for food to restore life. "See, O LORD, and consider, For I am scorned."

They had "sinned gravely." We've seen in our studies in Jeremiah how they constructed idols in the Temple; worshipped the foreign gods by participating in immoral sexual rituals; and sacrificed their own infant children to death.

I want to focus on the words in verse nine, "she did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome."

There are at least two ways to think of the word "destiny." One way is that the people did not think ahead to see the consequences of their behavior. Even in light of the warnings in God's written Word and through God's spoken words, through the prophets, the people did not think ahead to consequences.

Why did they ignore the consequences? Something Jeremiah said in his other book comes to mind. As he would warn the people, they would say, "The Temple of The Lord! The Temple of The Lord!"

In other words, they thought of the Temple as a sort of good luck charm that would protect them from any 'real' harm. They could push the limits, go beyond God's boundaries, because they had His Temple.

They had watched while God allowed the Northern kingdom of Israel to be overrun and destroyed by the Assyrians. Ah, but the Northern kingdom did not have the Temple, did they? Bad for them, the Jews in Judah thought; nothing like that can happen here.

Destiny can also refer to their ultimate purpose as a nation - to bring the knowledge of God to the world. Instead of considering that awesome mission, they allowed the world to influence them.

If you have time to sin, you don't understand the times!

Their "collapse was awesome" because they never thought it could come. God, however, wasn't messing around. Though He was slow to bring it, the destruction came as forewarned.

We should think more about our destiny, in both these ways, as believers in Jesus. We, too, are commissioned to bring the knowledge of God to the world. People are perishing. If they're not perishing, they are suffering. We have the words of eternal life - the keys to unlock the kingdom. We can offer God's forgiveness of sins and promise that as old things pass away, all things become new.

We should not have time to sin in light of our mission and the seriousness of reaching folks who need what only we can share.

On a more gut level, sin always has consequences. It may offer excitement and pleasure but it always, *always*, leaves you a widow... Or a slave... or an abandoned lover... or a betrayed friend. It harms those who are innocent around you - your children, if you have them, for example.

If you have time to sin, you don't understand the times!

The last half of the chapter has Jerusalem personified speaking out about her fate.

Lamentations 1:12 "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see If there is any sorrow like my sorrow, Which has been brought on me, Which the LORD has inflicted In the day of His fierce anger.

Lamentations 1:13 "From above He has sent fire into my bones, And it overpowered them; He has spread a net for my feet And turned me back; He has made me desolate And faint all the day.

Lamentations 1:14 "The yoke of my transgressions was bound; They were woven together by His hands, And thrust upon my neck. He made my strength fail; The Lord delivered me into the hands of those whom I am not able to withstand.

Lamentations 1:15 "The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me To crush my young men; The Lord trampled as in a winepress The virgin daughter of Judah.

Lamentations 1:16 "For these things I weep; My eye, my eye overflows with water; Because the comforter, who should restore my life, Is far from me. My children are desolate Because the enemy prevailed."

Lamentations 1:17 Zion spreads out her hands, But no one comforts her; The LORD has commanded concerning Jacob That those around him become his adversaries; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.

As we read this you see the repetition of "the Lord," "the Lord," "the Lord." One thing is certain: God now had their full attention.

Did He really have to go that far to get their full attention? Yes; that far and no farther.

From our perspective it can seem God allows things that are extreme. But He's not like the person who finally loses his temper and lashes out. His punishments are all measured and perfect.

Judah was overrun, Jerusalem destroyed, the Temple burned, the people taken captive - **because nothing short of that would return them to their spiritual center.**

Lamentations 1:18 "The LORD is righteous, For I rebelled against His commandment. Hear now, all peoples, And behold my sorrow; My virgins and my young men Have gone into captivity.

Lamentations 1:19 "I called for my lovers, But they deceived me; My priests and my elders Breathed their last in the city, While they sought food To restore their life.

Lamentations 1:20 "See, O LORD, that I am in distress; My soul is troubled; My heart is overturned within me, For I have been very rebellious. Outside the sword bereaves, At home it is like death.

Lamentations 1:21 "They have heard that I sigh, But no one comforts me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; They are glad that You have done it. Bring on the day You have announced, That they may become like me.

Lamentations 1:22 "Let all their wickedness come before You, And do to them as You have done to me For all my transgressions; For my sighs are many, And my heart is faint."

Allow me to pick out a few phrases and string them together.
"The LORD is righteous... Hear now, all peoples... do to them as You have done to me for all my transgressions."

They had a testimony ("the Lord is righteous") to tell other nations and peoples ("hear now, all peoples") with the warning that God's longsuffering with sin will one day end and He must judge them ("do to them...").

God would use them in their repentance to show His coming judgment upon all nations for their sins, but also His mercy upon those who would repent at their example.

It reminds me of King David's attitude about God's punishment after he'd sinned.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 51:11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Psalm 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Psalm 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

If ever you find yourself mourning over your sin... in a place where your "collapse is awesome..." God will restore you. You will again minister to folks looking on.

You will reveal to them that His mercies are indeed new every morning **and** in each mourning.